

Embassy of India

Tokyo

Remarks by Ambassador of India to Japan Sibi George at the Graduation Ceremony IISJ, March 26, 2023

Dear Founder Madam Nirmal Jain, Principal,
Respected teachers and my dear students,
Good Afternoon.

I am very happy to join you today on the occasion of Graduation ceremony of the outgoing students of class 12. I congratulate the students for completion of academic year 2022-23. I thank the founder Madam Nirmal Jain and the Principal for inviting me today. I am so happy to see you students, your energy, enthusiasm.

Before I start my remarks, let me ask you a question? How many of you have visited the Embassy of India? We have one of the most beautiful cherry blossom sites in Tokyo. I invite you all to visit our Embassy before your departure for a coffee, and for a familiarization visit.

Dear Friends,

With Covid 19 pandemic around us, last two-three years have been a very difficult period for all of us including for you children, who are graduating today. To put it bluntly, three years of Covid 19 pandemic has denied you children almost three years of your childhood. It has not been easy. It hasn't been easy for children, easy for parents, for teachers and for school authorities. For many

days you children were not able to visit the school physically. None of you have been able to go out and play as we used to do in normal times.

Dear Friends,

As we are still facing some of the Covid 19 pandemic challenges, let me dwell a bit deep into it. Let's look at the situation from a different angle. We were all witness to developments related to Covid 19 pandemic that would be talked about even after many decades from now. And when our future generations look at us they will not sympathize with us as someone who suffered a monumental tragedy; instead they will remember us as path breakers in the way we turned the moments of crisis into moments of opportunities to bounce back ever more strongly. Humans are a resilient species; we have proved that for hundreds of thousands of years and we faced the Covid 19 challenges too with unmatched fortitude, bravery and ingenuity.

Ten years, fifteen years, twenty years down the line, or hundred years later when history is written and next generations read about this Covid 19 era, how do they look at it? As I see it now, they will record and read it as how we faced the Covid 19 challenges with determination and commitment. How our leaderships kept inspiring us and not letting us lose hope? How our countries kept feeding its population despite the many challenges and setbacks to economies? How our scientists invented vaccines in record time within one year of the origin of the pandemic.

On an average any new vaccine takes over ten years of research or even more to be invented and made available for public use. Here our scientists of 2020 -21 period did it in just few months. How our medical professionals, doctors and nurses rose to the occasion and comforted those infected and saved lives? How our

schools and teachers invented ways and means to keep the education going? How our IT professionals invented new digital platforms to keep us engaged and connected? How our students adjusted to the new normal and keep up with their studies? And the story of those graduating today will be written in golden letters as someone who defeated Covid 19 pandemic and graduated.

Dear Students,

Last night, I was thinking on how I should imagine and share with you today on the situation that outgoing students of class twelve face today. Three names came to my mind. Names of three heroes who we are all familiar with. One Christopher Columbus. We have all heard about him. A sailor par excellence who dreamt of travelling to India and launched a sailing expedition to India. He faced a very turbulent situation before he started his expedition and during long voyage. The obstacles he faced included securing funding, gaining acceptance of his theory for the size of the Earth, and surviving the voyage itself. He made four trips across the Atlantic Ocean from Spain: in 1492, 1493, 1498 and 1502. In his voyages he encountered hurricane, malaria, rebellion, arrest, shipwreck. He wrote in his diary and I quote: "The tempest arose and wearied me so that I knew not where to turn, my old wound opened up, and for 9 days I was lost without hope of life; eyes never beheld the sea so angry and covered with foam". Despite all these challenges he was determined to find a direct water route from Europe to India, but he never did it. Instead, he discovered Americas and the Red Indians.

Now from ocean, let's move to the mountains, our own Himalayas. We all heard about Tensing and Hillary. After years of dreaming about it and seven weeks of climbing, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the top of Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, at 11:30 a.m. on May 29, 1953. I recall doing

a project as a management trainee on the leadership lessons to be learnt from their climb of Mount Everest. It highlighted the importance of strategic thinking, decisive action, personal integrity, team spirit and many other worthy qualities that one requires to acquire to undertake a journey. When problems arose, they could rapidly worsen or be resolved depending on how quickly people put into action the many theoretical leadership concepts they learnt. For the hundreds of climbers who attempted to reach the summit of Mount Everest, effective leadership literally meant the difference between life and death. Despite all the challenges and turbulent weather, Tensing and Hillary, made it to top of the world.

And the third person who came to my mind went slightly higher than the Mount Everest. Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the Moon. The Apollo 11 mission to the moon was one of humanity's most incredible success stories, but it almost got derailed by several heart-racing moments. There were unexpected alarms, low fuel during the flight, broken switch, stormy weather etc. It wasn't an easy ride. But he is remembered today for his quote: "This is a small step for a man, a giant leap for the mankind".

Dear Students,

I said these very familiar stories to just remind you that there were many before us who faced turbulent weather and challenges of unimaginable proportions in life. There are many more who refused to give up and made history. They managed to overcome those challenges and realized their full potential in life. As you leave your school life in an uncertain world let's take a pledge to remain calm and face these challenges with conviction and certitude.

As this is the time you chose a field of specialization in your academic life, let me tell you this. Follow your passion while selecting your subject for future studies. Chose the subject that you

love most. Consult your parents, consult your teachers, consult your elders, consult experts, but take your own decision. It should be your choice and not of someone else. What is important is to excel in what we chose to do in our lives. Excel in the subject we chose to specialize, excel in what do you today. Top that list. See an opportunity in everything around us. Keep our eyes and ears open to see opportunities. We will be able to meet our target, irrespective of the challenges that Covid or any pandemic or any competition of the modern world offers. Let's not forget that the modern world of completion also offers us more opportunities. There is enough opportunities for all of you to excel in life.

I wish you all a safe and healthy stay. I wish you all the best for a bright future. Remember whatever field you chose, try and top the list. Wherever you travel for your studies remember your teachers and try to be in touch with them. Take care. All the best.

Thank you.
